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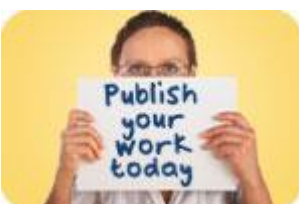
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## Morality under anarchy: neorealism and the foreign aid regime

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### Abstract

This article argues that neorealist theory can be properly maintained against a neoidealist critique that stresses the moral impact of the 'foreign aid regime'. Neoidealists have attacked neorealism, claiming that aid is best explained by considerations of humanity and distributive justice, rather than strategic and economic interests of donor states, and thereby embodies (the potential for) moral transformation of the international system. A threefold argument is to show that the neoidealist attack on neorealism only has limited success. First, the neoidealist argument of moral factors being foundational to aid may be more convincing than a standard neorealist argument of security-related factors being the main direct causes, but neorealism is not automatically silenced by this. Second, as basically a 'second image' explanation, neoidealism overlooks a progressive/conservative discontinuity in the morality behind aid that reveals neoidealism's overall internal incoherence. Third, the typically conservative character of the aid regime can be properly explained by 'third image' neorealist propositions about states as primarily egoistic security-seekers under anarchy. While neoidealism clarifies the implausibility of an extreme neorealism that assumes states to maximize their security and also to use aid directly for this purpose, it is wrong to regard itself as superior to neorealism *per se*. Rather, the aid regime suggests the plausibility of a 'mixed neorealist' theory that assigns clear priority to national security but also expects states, if once secure, to show altruistic behavior depending on the nature and development of their domestic moral-political systems.

Keywords: neorealism; neoidealism; foreign aid; development assistance; international anarchy; global distributive justice

### Article body

#### Introduction

This article argues that neorealism - arguably the dominant theory of international politics - can be properly maintained against a recent neoidealist critique that emphasizes the moral impact of the 'foreign aid regime': the more than fifty-year old international practice of overseas development assistance. Aid given by rich states to poor ones constitutes an enduring feature of North-South relations and a financial transfer of more than 2 trillion U.S. dollars to date (Lumsdaine 1993: 4; Noël and Thérien 1995: 552; Thérien 2002: 449). Yet prominent neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979) and John Mearsheimer (2001) have been virtually silent about it. Theoretically, neorealism is attacked by neoidealists who believe that the very existence of a 'foreign aid regime' proves neorealism's untenability: the underlying 'moral vision' based on values such as 'humanity' and 'justice' has transformative potential (Lumsdaine 1993; Noël and Thérien 1995; 2002; Thérien and Noël 2000). Neoidealists claim that aid is not based on strategic and economic donor interests, but constitutes 'a significant revision of the international system on the basis of the recognition of a moral obligation to the weak' (Lumsdaine 1993: 290), and 'has contributed substantially to the transformation of contemporary world politics' (Thérien 2002: 449). However, as I intend to show, while altruistic impulses may be the *sine qua non* of aid, neorealism can be upheld against the neoidealist critique; neorealism can even absorb this critique by reforming itself toward a morally more positive theory without giving up its core insights. Aid does not help transform the dangerous anarchical

international system, yet seems a largely independent moral force that might make the system more bearable (cf. Waltz 2000: 5, 39).

Neorealism I take to rest on four core propositions (Waltz 1979). First, the international political system is permanently constituted by anarchy. In the absence of world government, the international realm is invariably anarchic, while it does allow the international system to vary in the way in which capabilities are distributed across units. Second, states are the main units of the international system. Third, seeking to ensure their survival under anarchy, states have security as their primary goal, only pursuing the other goals they may have once security is assured. Fourth, seeking to ensure their survival, states are primarily egoistic or 'self-regarding', with concern for others as secondary at best. Taken together, these propositions have a crucial implication for political morality: 'Moral behavior is one thing in a system that provides predictable amounts and types of security; another thing where such security is lacking' (Waltz 1959: 207, cf. 1986: 344). Thus, I take neorealism not in an extreme formulation that assumes states to try maximize their security, but in a more moderate, 'reasonable' formulation that assigns clear priority to national security (Glaser 2003: 412; cf. Mercer 1995: 231). While it does not deny moral motivations in individuals and political elites and is not 'structurally determinist' (Waltz 1979: 174; contra Murray 1997: 4-9), neorealism holds international politics to be distinctive in the sense that anarchy produces 'like units' whose own security interests generally come first. Yet, while it is not skeptical about international morality - altruistic behavior, albeit constrained, is possible in international politics (cf. Waltz 1993: 55; Glaser 2003; Desch 2003) - neorealism is skeptical about a universalist application of principles of distributive justice (as advocated by cosmopolitans such as Beitz 1999): such principles might exist domestically, but they cannot be pursued globally for being dashed against the struggle for the power to survive as an inescapable outcome of anarchy (Kamminga 2006).

Neoidealism may be seen as a 'liberal-constructivist' position, one that regards foreign aid as an embodiment of moral vision with the potential to transform international politics. Thus, David Lumsdaine claims aid to rest on 'humanitarian and egalitarian convictions', a 'sense of justice and compassion', and the 'extension of [the moral logic of the welfare state] beyond national borders' on the basis of 'the same values' (Lumsdaine 1993: 29, 283, 185, 143; cf. Amstutz 2005: 16, 36, 209). Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien conceive aid as a movement 'from domestic to international justice' based on the 'relation of complementarity' between the institutions that promote these forms of 'justice' (Noël and Thérien 1995: article title, 551), with 'global justice' (Noël and Thérien 2002), or 'greater international equality' (Thérien 2002: 450, cf. 452-453), as the ultimate underlying motive. Gunnar Myrdal regards aid as the logical product of the 'doctrine of equality' (Myrdal 1973: 47). While acknowledging that aid motives are normally mixed, neoidealists insist that moral factors have been decisive in the long run: for the origin, sustainability, and development of aid as a regime. Neoidealists claim the validity of their position to extend beyond foreign aid as a 'paradigm case' (Lumsdaine 1993: 29, cf. 4): '[m]oral factors can alter the tenor of international life, not only in peripheral ways, but by changing the character of the system' (ibid.: 29).

A threefold argument is to show that the neoidealist attack on neorealism only has limited success. I start by demonstrating neoidealism's initial plausibility (first argument), next I offer an internal critique of neoidealism (second argument), and then I show the analytic contribution of the four neorealist core propositions, thus providing an external critique of neoidealism (third argument). Thus, first, the neoidealist argument of moral factors being foundational to aid may be more convincing than a standard neorealist argument of security-related factors being the main direct causes, but neorealism is not automatically silenced by this. Second, as basically a 'second image' explanation, neoidealism overlooks a progressive/conservative discontinuity in the morality behind aid that reveals neoidealism's overall internal incoherence. Third, the typically conservative character of the aid regime can be properly explained by 'third image' neorealist propositions about states as primarily egoistic security-seekers under anarchy. While neoidealism clarifies the implausibility of an extreme neorealism that assumes states to maximize their security and also to use aid directly for this purpose, it is wrong to regard itself as superior to neorealism *per se*. Rather, the aid regime suggests the plausibility of a 'mixed neorealist' theory that assigns clear priority to national security but also expects states, if once secure, to show altruistic behavior depending on the nature and development of their domestic moral-political systems. If successful, foreign aid may help change the international system, not basically - in overstating the transformative impact of moral factors, neoidealism offers insufficient reason for abandoning neorealism's core propositions - yet in

meaningfully peripheral ways.[1]

### **Neoidealism and the role of moral factors**

As I shall demonstrate, the neoidealist claim that moral factors are basic to aid is sufficiently plausible for reconsidering, if not abandoning, any inclination to regard strategic or economic interests as the main immediate aid causes. Yet I shall also show why neorealism need not admit defeat, at least not right away.

Traditionally, scholars have argued that countries provide aid primarily for non-altruistic reasons: strategic, political, ideological, economic, colonial, historical, and cultural (cf. Alesina and Dollar 2000; Breuning 1995; Schraeder et al. 1998). Thus, U.S. aid has been explained by pointing to strategic interests related to the Cold War and the recent 'war on terror', with economic (notably trade) interests second especially during the 1990s. Japanese aid has been attributed to economic self-interest and now increasingly to its security aims. European aid has been claimed to exist because of donor interests in special ties with former colonies (Schraeder et al. 1998; Alesina and Dollar 2000; Lai 2003; Woods 2005: 401, 403; Raffer and Singer 2001: chs. 5-6; Olsen 1998). If all this were correct, neorealism could plausibly explain a large portion, if not most, of aid directly.

However, the rival neoidealist argument that foreign aid is not mainly caused by donor self-interests, but is an embodiment of moral vision with transformative potential, I would argue, has a particular, fourfold strength (cf. Kamminga 2004: 540-545). First, to support their position neoidealists use a systematic and broad analysis of extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence that goes beyond the case-by-case analyses often employed by aid scholars who emphasize egoistic factors, and also focuses on the emergence of aid, similarities and differences between donors' policies, aid proponents and opponents, the impact of domestic beliefs, historical antecedents, the most important aid recipients, and the developments within the aid regime. Second, certain general features of the aid regime, which suggest that aid has been directed primarily at the economic development of the poorest countries and increasingly less at direct donor advantage, seem hard to explain without invoking moral factors.[2] Thus, neoidealists can clarify why aid appeared suddenly and rapidly, the poverty focus of aid grew over time, tied aid steadily declined, and the gifts-loans ratio steadily increased into the twenty-first century (Lumsdaine 1993; Hattori 2003: 242-243).[3]

Third, neoidealism makes plausible why U.S., Japanese, and European aid can only be adequately explained if moral factors are included. Fear of communism did influence U.S. aid: the United States contributed most vigorously to the regime in the early 1960s when the Cold War was intense (Lumsdaine 1993: 241-242, 286, 133; Thérien 2002: 454). However, U.S. aid originates with left-wing New Dealers and Wilsonian internationalists, and has consistently been supported by liberal Democrats and opposed by right-wing Republicans (Lumsdaine 1993: 56, 219, 227; cf. Thérien 2002: 452-453). Although U.S. aid declined since the late 1960s and further after the Cold War, no quick drop of its level occurred (Lumsdaine 1993: 110). And while about one-third of U.S. aid goes to politically and strategically important countries such as Israel and Egypt, the rest is mainly directed at poor countries because of recipient need (ibid.: 82, 90-93, 102; Alesina and Dollar 2000). The mix of humanitarian and strategic concerns Lumsdaine (1993: 42, 255, 286) detects behind U.S. aid clarifies U.S. aid behavior both during the Cold War and shortly after (Meernik et al. 1998; Lai 2003), and also the U.S. aid increase after '11 September' (Radelet 2003; Woods 2005: 397-400). Humanitarianism is more clearly present in U.S. than in Japanese aid, since the mid-1990s particularly in the aim of poverty reduction (Lumsdaine 1993: 88-93; Alesina and Dollar 2000; Tuman et al. 2001). Yet Japanese aid, too, has been motivated by a mixed humanitarian-security rationale: particularly Japanese aid to Latin America has rested on both economic interests and separate poverty reduction goals (Tuman et al. 2001). European aid does not endure because of donor interests in special ties with ex-colonies, being (even) more morally motivated than U.S. and Japanese aid. European

aid to ex-colonies has consistently declined from the beginning, having gone more and more to low-income countries. Insofar aid to ex-colonies was continued, as with Dutch aid to Indonesia and most of British aid - with India as largest recipient -, it usually concerned low income countries with large populations (Lumsdaine 1993: 82-85, 107-109).[4] Moreover, a left-wing motive of 'justice' entailing an independent commitment to poverty reduction and recipient economic development (ibid.: 99, 102) has marked European aid since the 1960s, having become most typical of Nordic and Dutch aid. This motive has even become crucial for the entire aid regime: the U.S. share has consistently decreased since the late 1960s (from a quarter to one-fifth to one-sixth, albeit rising again to a quarter since 2002; Woods 2005: 397), and the European Union (EU) has become the world's largest donor, providing more than half of total aid today - twice as much as the United States (cf. United Nations 2007: 153).

Fourth, neoidealists persuasively stress the role of the post-war welfare state ethics - a main point that 'traditional' aid scholars have tended to ignore. Thus, a direct aid motive is that concern for poor citizens through social spending in one's own, rich country should go together with material attention to foreigners even worse off; the poor abroad should benefit from one's welfare, too. Neoidealists have realized, however, that this general moral motive needs specification, if only because welfare states differ significantly in their concern for the poor. Thus, further inquiry by Noël and Thérien (1995) shows that profound aid commitment follows not so much from welfare state institutions *per se* but from particular institutional arrangements: 'socialist' attributes, or the social capacity based on a shared conception of citizenship to accept egalitarian, non-market principles of income distribution as positive and feasible, and to institutionalize these in high spending for redistribution. Drawing on extensive statistical research, these authors conclude that a single, all-determining variable is involved: 'the more welfare states have socialist attributes, the more generous are their development assistance policies', whatever the extent to which welfare states also have 'conservative' or 'liberal' features (ibid.: 540).[5] The crucial socialist attributes are also shaped by the cumulative power of social democratic political parties that exercise an indirect and long-term upward effect on the aid level (Thérien and Noël 2000; cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 161). 'Such findings provide solid empirical support for the idea that the welfare state and the aid regime are based on a common left-wing ethic' (Thérien 2002: 453).

Importantly, neoidealism contributes to explaining the divergence of aid levels. Thus, it clarifies why Norway (0.93% of GNP in 2005; United Nations 2007: 153), Sweden (0.92%), Denmark (0.81%) and the Netherlands (0.82%) are relatively large donors - their welfare states can be called 'high-socialist';[6] why countries such as the United Kingdom (0.48%), France (0.47%), and Germany (0.35%) occupy an intermediate donor position - their welfare states can be seen as 'mid-socialist'; and why Japan (0.28%) and the United States (0.22%) relatively give little aid - their welfare states appear respectively 'low-socialist' and 'non-socialist' (Noël and Thérien 1995: 542-545; cf. Thérien and Noël 2000: 158-159; Lumsdaine 1993: 121; Esping-Andersen 1990: 74).[7] On a world regional level, it clarifies why the EU is a large donor and the United States gives (relatively) little. In Western Europe, much trust has long existed in collective action to eliminate class differences. The impact of labor movements and Christian social traditions has often been an ethos of social justice directed at equal provisions (cf. Judt 2005: 97). Europe features a 'socialism' anchored deeply in its cultural base, which has resulted in 'high-socialist' and 'mid-socialist' welfare states and relatively high aid levels (cf. Esping-Andersen et al. 2002). By contrast, the United States, where socialism has hardly gained any footing and income inequality has always been high, puts with its 'liberal' welfare state all its faith in the operation of the market. It attaches no positive significance to organized solidarity and belief in social malleability, but features an individualist ethos of self-help and competitiveness that takes large social inequalities for granted. This set of ideas seems in tension with generous foreign aid provision: if one has little trust in governmental care for the poor in one's own country, then one will also see little reason for aiding the poor abroad (cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 286). Noël and Thérien (2002) have further strengthened the 'Left matters' thesis by demonstrating the supporting role of public opinion: mass publics in Europe basically consists of coherent cosmopolitan egalitarians who aim to have distributive justice established first domestically and then globally. When equality has been institutionalized as an important principle, the public acknowledges the results and supports international redistribution. On the whole, European citizens are not nationalists who advocate giving priority to compatriots, but regard starting at home as simply the only sensible way to do good.[8]

In short, serious reason exists for taking the neoidealist argument of moral factors being the main direct causes of aid as more illuminating than a neorealist one that points to the immediacy of strategic or economic factors. It would otherwise be hard to fully understand why rich countries decided after World

War II to offer aid to poor ones and have continued to do so, why donors' aid levels differ remarkably, and why donors have sought to improve the effectiveness of aid as a means of poverty reduction (cf. Riddell 1987; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 890; Woods 2005: 408). Factors of humanity and especially socialist justice seem essential for aid as a long-term project in all its motive and level variety. Plausibly, since the aid practice reached maturity in the 1960s and 1970s, 'the values and principles embodied in social democratic institutions created at the domestic level had a clear impact on the foreign aid regime' (Noël and Thérien 1995: 551).

Even so, neorealists are not, or not yet, forced to admit that their theory has nothing to say about foreign aid and the transformative potential of the moral factors sustaining it. First, it does not follow from its propositions that neorealism is bound to explain aid as directly and primarily caused by strategic importance or economic potential (contra Schraeder et al. 1998: 298, 303, cf. 299; Lumsdaine 1993). Neorealism may take the aid causes, even if morality-related, to lie in individual states as well as in the international system (cf. Waltz 1979: 48-49, 78, 87; 1986: 328, 343; Buzan et al. 1993: 23, 83), although, of course, it itself must specifically aim to explain how external forces shape states' behavior in this regard (cf. Waltz 1979: 71-72, 121-123; 2004: 3-4; 1959). Lumsdaine (1993: 14-21, 28-29), then, is wrong to see Waltzian neorealism as structurally determinist and skeptical about international morality. Second, at this point it is unclear whether indeed the foreign aid regime may entail morally fundamental system change. Thus, further inquiry is needed to establish whether neoidealism succeeds as an attack on the neorealist framework.

### **Progressive/conservative discontinuity: against neoidealism I**

Although neoidealists include the moral influence of international public opinion, international organization, and international interaction between states and citizens (Lumsdaine 1993), they claim that they basically provide a 'second image' (Noël and Thérien 1995: 525; Thérien 2002; cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 28-29) explanation of foreign aid. I now argue that as such the neoidealist attack on neorealism is hard to maintain on its own grounds. Neoidealism appears to miss a crucial discontinuity in the morality behind aid - a progressive/conservative one - which undermines its coherence as a transformative doctrine.

As we have seen, neoidealists claim that the Western welfare state and the aid regime embody 'the same values', thereby emphasizing the presence of 'a common left-wing ethic' of 'equality'. However, what should bother them about aid simply being the international moral extension of the domestic welfare state is one striking difference between both: in a world of great welfare inequalities, the outward transfers through aid of all Western states, including the European ones, are only a small fraction of their internal transfers between rich and poor (Brown 2002: 1; but cf. Noël and Thérien 1995: 525). Even the international efforts of the relatively generous donors - the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway - are minimal, if we relate them to their expensive domestic social systems. It might be that this gap reveals the presence of a double morality: perhaps not so much in the case of the United States and Japan as relatively small aid donors, but at least so in the case of the relatively large European donors. I now try to show that the aid regime morality does differ deeply and qualitatively from the European socialist welfare state morality - and thus that foreign aid is not just a 'less stronger' version of the European commitment to distributive justice than that at home (contra especially Noël and Thérien 2002) - starting by recalling some basic yet crucial features of socialism, the main doctrinal impulse for aid as neoidealism itself so plausibly argues (cf. Kamminga 2004: 546-548).

Socialism advocates an egalitarian society in which the capitalist 'order' of a privileged economic elite exploiting the great majority has given way to a solidary, cooperative order. It should not be understood as merely a protest against the misery that accompanied the Industrial Revolution: equality, not poverty, is the issue (Davis 1994; cf. Lichtheim 1970). Karl Marx, the intellectual father of communism and social democracy, saw the scope of the egalitarian society as global, not national. Capitalism had broken national

boundaries, and had brought humanity within a single stream of world history, in which economic and technological unification for the time being went along with lack of solidarity between capitalists and workers as two classes condemned to each other. Workers shared no fatherland, but, given their universal deprivation, had a common interest in establishing socialism. Their primary loyalty belonged to their class, which represented the whole of humanity; their organizations were involved in a cosmopolitan political project. Through revolutionary struggle, socialism would soon replace capitalism, eliminate exploitation and domination, and bring real freedom to all (Marx and Engels 1848; cf. Boucher 1998: 354-374; Linklater 2005). However, since the early twentieth century, a strong bond has existed between socialism and the nation-state (Ludz 1977; Kusin 1977). As Marx' expectation of the capitalist collapse at the end of the nineteenth century proved wrong, socialists felt it necessary to control the market and protect workers through government intervention, and thus to adapt their theory to 'the facts'. Real politics became a national affair about electoral and social struggle for government and policy. Whereas the Marxist had emphasized global solidarity above national independence, the 'revisionist' accepted the state as the embodiment of national unity and the instrument for progress of the proletariat. Despite their belief in socialist states as reasonable and peace-loving and thus in the service of humanity, the revisionists effectively gave up cosmopolitanism (Waltz 1959: 124-158). In Western Europe, workers have eventually acquired a high level of equality (concerning educational opportunities, working conditions, and welfare levels) mostly because of the pressure from socialist ideas and movements (Kolakowski 1977: 16), but elsewhere this value has stayed out of reach for the poor. In fact, capitalism has only become more global and global inequality has only increased (Raffer and Singer 2001). Yet Marx' cosmopolitanism apparently lives on in contemporary European mass publics, which explicitly indicates that 'international redistribution is important' (Noël and Thérien 2002: 641-645).

Now in the absence of global proletarian revolution, can foreign aid (if effective) be explained as an instrument for promoting global equality (Thérien 2002: 462)? To maintain its coherence as a transformative doctrine, neoidealism would need a positive answer to this question. However, the answer is no: aid presupposes and sustains inequality. As Tomohisa Hattori (2003) points out, as a moral practice foreign aid should, first and foremost, be conceived as an unreciprocated gift - as a voluntary gesture, a gift in the form of grants and concessional loans, which legitimizes the existing material North-South order in terms of social distinction and desert. By the action of accepting the gift (without being able to return the gesture), recipient countries acknowledge not just the material hierarchy but also the moral virtuousness of the donors, so that between donor and recipient a moral hierarchy arises. In this way, the aid practice of 'beneficence' helps to legitimize the dominant role of donor states as a morally justified desert. It is this effect of affirming the *status quo* that reveals what aid is primarily about, much more so than the substantive content and aim of aid projects and programmes (ibid.: 232-234, 237, 243-246). To put Hattori's point differently: the aid practice aims to create a (second) welfare 'state', though a *conservative* (cf. Esping-Andersen 1990; Kamminga 2004: 548-549) one. Aid implies that Western states rightly derive a prominent international position from their economic welfare and power, which, though, carries with it the social responsibility to provide care to the poorest countries that, as historically grown associations, have the primary responsibility for their own citizens. Hence donor states and international organizations involved transfer resources not directly to (poor) individuals, but to the governments of the states of which they are citizens. While the conservative aid ethics already differs from U.S. and Japanese liberal welfare ethics, it is a far cry from the ethics of egalitarian distribution found in European welfare states and the cosmopolitan egalitarianism of European mass publics: a progressive domestic morality of 'distributive justice' turns into a conservative international one of 'beneficence'.

Neoidealism, then, goes seriously wrong insofar as it confuses 'foreign aid' with 'international redistribution' for the sake of 'global equality' (cf. Hattori 2003: 245; contra especially Noël and Thérien 1995; 2002; Thérien and Noël 2000). If socialist Europe did strive for global redistribution on the basis of the same value of equality as it upholds domestically, it would by no means support an aid regime (let alone take over the lead position from the United States), but make a strong and potentially successful effort to establish something quite different and much more demanding: a global social democratic (thus not conservative) welfare state. In socialist economist Myrdal's terms, Europe would develop power to transform the 'protectionist and [economically] nationalist' European welfare state into a 'Welfare World' (Myrdal 1960: 159, 176), which would radically redistribute the world's wealth towards a more equitable distribution among individuals (cf. Bull 2002: 81, 279-280), establishing, say, a global basic income (Van Parijs 1995: 223-228). Or there would be a persistent European attempt to establish a full-blown development cooperation regime, which would presumably include cosmopolitanism-based fair tax, financial, trade, agricultural, and/or climate regimes (cf. Beitz 1999: 216; Barry 1991). It would be implausible for a neoidealist either to insist that the aid regime is somehow related to global social democratic welfarism or to switch to the alternative position that strong attempts to implement more

radical proposals or regimes actually exist (cf. Arts and Dickson 2004).[9]

In short, neoidealism runs into deep problems of coherency, as it fails to grasp one major moral discontinuity of aid: domestic progressivism bleeds into international conservatism. Aid may well be fueled by left-wing or socialist ideas, but it breaks away from the equality value itself and thus does not fit within an originally socialist worldview. Neoidealists may insist that even a conservative aid ethics proves the independent contribution of morality to international politics - one neorealism could not have foreseen. Even so, we need to know why international morality appears to take on a conservative appearance. And to know why aid exists *instead of* some more ambitious international moral practice - second image neoidealism cannot help us here - we must turn to a separately international, third image analysis. As a deep gap between domestic and international morality is no surprise for neorealism, serious reason exists to investigate if it might explain this gap.[10]

### **Neorealism and foreign aid conservatism: against neoidealism II**

Having criticized the neoidealist attack on neorealism on its own grounds, we may now try to bring neorealism back in. My third argument is that the typically conservative character of the foreign aid regime can be properly explained by our four neorealist propositions about states as primarily egoistic security-seekers under anarchy. The argument proceeds by showing the analytic contribution of each of these propositions.

Taken together, the first and second neorealist propositions - states are the main units in an anarchic international system that does allow the system to vary as regards the capabilities distribution - already help to explain the aid regime. As neorealism would expect, aid presupposes, rather than challenges, the primacy of anarchy and states. A cosmopolitan socialist project would be 'inherently revolutionary' (Bull 2002: 84-85, 280), and presumably require some centralized apparatus to redistribute resources from rich people and more capable states to poor people elsewhere for the sake of interpersonal egalitarianism (cf. Hattori 2003: 245). However, in the absence of a world government that could establish the required global shift in power, a neoidealist global redistributive regime does not, and cannot, exist. Even together, European states lack the power to implement such a regime, if only because the non-socialist United States possesses the great capability to prevent it. What do exist are states whose practical disappearance even socialism has long given up (Waltz 1959: 142-143), and that have the power to choose to what extent they will assist other states in their economic development. That there is *merely* an aid regime is in line with this basic neorealist outlook. A bit too strongly put: foreign aid occurs because there is nothing to enforce global distributive justice.

The third neorealist proposition was that states, in seeking to ensure their survival under anarchy, have security as their primary goal, only pursuing their other goals once security is guaranteed. This proposition helps to explain the aid regime in several ways. First, total Western expenditure on aid remains much less than total Western expenditure on defense. For example, when in 2002 official aid increased to 58 billion U.S. dollars, it remained more than ten times smaller than the sum of defense expenditure by high-income countries, which was about 600 billion (Soubbotina 2004: 99-100). Second, the aid regime arose and matured in an age in which the security of the states that provide aid was no (longer) a serious concern, and it seems plausible to assume that security is a main precondition for aid. During both the Cold War and the age of terrorism, the United States, which has the world's largest defense budget, 'has [had] few serious reasons to worry much about its security' (Waltz 2004: 5, cf. 1993: 73); the same holds for Japan and Europe as 'consumers' of American security (cf. Mearsheimer 2001: 382). As a neorealist would expect, it is the security imperative being met that allows the United States and Japan to export at least partially their individualist political cultures and give aid for the purpose of humanity (cf. Meernik et al. 1998; Lai 2003); and as from World War II to this day Western Europe has enjoyed American protection (Waltz 2004: 5), the same is true for the European socialist-motivated project of providing aid in relatively



large amounts. Third, in elaboration of the former points and in combination with the first two neorealist propositions, European aid confirms the neorealist view that one should focus not on small powers, which is what neoidealists tend to do, but on the great ones that determine the structure of the international system (Waltz 1979: 72-73, cf. 94, 151; 1995: 74; Mearsheimer 2001). From the bipolar international system time onward, the United States as a great power has spent enormous financial resources to provide for its own security and that of its smaller allies. As Waltz explains, this made possible the development of small-power Europe into a somewhat distinct political realm:

Consider...the effects on European states of the shift from a multipolar to a bipolar system. So long as European states were the world's great powers, unity among them could only be dreamed of...The emergence of the Russian and American superpowers created a situation that *permitted* wider ranging and more effective cooperation among the states of Western Europe. They became consumers of security...*For the first time in modern history*, the determinants of war and peace lay outside the arena of European states, and the means of their preservation were provided by others. These new circumstances *made possible* the famous 'upgrading of the common interest'... Because the security of [European states] came to depend ultimately on the policies of others...unity could effectively be worked for (Waltz 1979: 70-71, emphases mine).

What is to be learned from Waltz's account? Simon Collard-Wexler (2006: especially 417), who argues that neorealism does a poor job in explaining the breadth and depth of European integration and the formation of the EU as manifesting forms of mixed hierarchy and functional differentiation, seems to miss the point: Waltz explains post-war Europe in terms of 'permissive' rather than 'immediate' causes (cf. Waltz 1959). In contrast to what Collard-Wexler (2006: 418, 423) asserts, neorealism can consistently acknowledge that American hegemony is no *immediate* cause of European integration, that the dynamics of cooperation seen in Western Europe failed to occur in East Asia among the ASEAN nations who also came under a U.S. security umbrella and faced a communist threat, and even that Mearsheimer (1990) was inaccurate to predict a period of great instability in Europe after the Cold War. Waltz's more modest yet forceful point - ignored by Collard-Wexler - is that American hegemony has been necessary for European unification as the desired institutionalization of a specifically European identity to become *possible*, and thus is its *permissive* cause (cf. for an historical account Lundestad 2005: 27-110). Likewise, neorealism, while by no means bound to an explanation of European (and Japanese) aid as *immediately* caused by U.S. hegemonic influence (contra Lumsdaine 1993: 53-54, 111-112), may consistently, and plausibly, argue that American hegemony has made European aid possible by creating the required security conditions, and thus is the *permissive* cause of socialism-driven European aid.[11] One strong neorealist contribution to explaining aid, then, is that the aid policies of the 'effectively semi-sovereign states' of Europe (Mearsheimer 2001: 382) became possible from the historical moment the United States took away their primary security concerns by carrying many of their burdens and giving them the freedom to erect a grand social democratic system (cf. Waltz 1993: 77). Neoidealists tend to ignore that states can only be generous with aid after their basic security is taken care of. That European socialist welfarism and foreign aid can exist is not just because of the importance the Nordics, the Netherlands, and other European states attach to them; it is also because of the hegemonic role of the United States.[12]

The fourth neorealist proposition was that, seeking to guarantee their survival, states are primarily egoistic. As neorealism thus assumes an upper limit to international altruistic behavior, the question is whether aid in any reasonable interpretation (as a gift) does not exceed this limit. As regards the United States and Japan, it would not be sufficient to point out that, while both have individualist political cultures and lack socialist welfare states, their commitment to the provision of aid for the needy abroad has been even less than their commitment to social spending for the needy at home. However unlikely it actually seems, these liberal countries might decide one day to meet the internationally agreed 0.7 percent of GNP aid target, or even to move beyond it. Yet the neorealist proposition of state egoism would hold even then: it seems implausible to suggest of the United States and Japan that to make, say, 1 or 2 percent of their GNPs available for aid would endanger their own survival.

More significantly, the neorealist state egoism proposition helps to explain the imperfection of European's socialism-based commitment to the poor elsewhere, even if its aid levels would increase to, say, 3 or 4 percent of GNP. Again, the socialist revisionists of the early twentieth century concluded that in practice

socialism must start as a national phenomenon: it would have to be established within one or more nation-states first. Governments would have to ensure national survival before they could promote international peace by exporting socialism to other parts of the world. However, this strategy did not work; in Waltz's (1959) plausible explanation, the socialist aspirations broke down on the egoistic struggle for survival and power as an inevitable consequence of international anarchy. Since then, the international system has worked in such a way that the European level of welfare provision can only be made available to non-Europeans in a very incomplete way. Exporting its social democratic welfare state to the world would be incompatible with serving European economic security interests, even endangering the survival of European states. Countries such as the Nordics and the Netherlands try hard to create distributive justice within their own borders, but - particularly within an inegalitarian capitalist world economy - the resulting (and still significant) measure of internal equality is inevitably accompanied by the maintenance of great inequality between their citizens and the rest of the world. A global extension of their social democratic welfare states would destroy the degree of internal distributive justice these states have struggled to achieve (cf. Brown 2002: 181-183; Kamminga 2004: 549), and erode the economic base of state survival. What neorealism clarifies and neoidealism cannot comprehend is that a generous and increasingly truly poverty-oriented aid policy could have been the only viable way for Europe to internationally extend its welfare socialism, at the price of egoistically breaking the cosmopolitan ideal of socialist solidarity still alive today.

Our four neorealist propositions, taken together, offer a plausible explanation of the typically conservative nature of the aid regime. Neoidealism may rightly indicate the forces of moral action in international politics (humanity, distributive justice), but it is neorealist theory that is able to explain their results (beneficence). Overall, aid is in line with the neorealist 'like units' expectation: European states, the Nordics and the Netherlands as aid 'forerunners' not in the last place, are just as security-seeking and self-regarding as the United States and Japan as aid 'laggards'.

## Conclusion

I have argued that, basically, the neoidealist attack on neorealism fails: the foreign aid regime accords with a neorealist theory of international politics. Neorealists should presumably grant that neoidealists have a unique point in showing the independent and enduring impact of moral factors on aid. Yet neorealists may insist that aid by no means refutes their theory but rather confirms it. The aid regime may well be regarded as the outcome of domestic cosmopolitan-moral forces tamed by interstate security-related, egoistic constraints - hence its rather undemanding, typically conservative nature. Insofar as aid is valuable for its contribution to poverty reduction and recipient economic development, we might endorse the immediate prescriptive implication of neoidealism: all rich countries, including the United States, should provide aid (even) more generously, and therefore transform themselves further in social democratic direction (cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 283-293). A neoidealist success in this respect is not something neorealism could, or would, exclude. However, given the moral nature of the aid regime, neorealists have good reason to maintain that aid does not entail a basic change of the international system, but embodies the will to do good without ever endangering donor state security. Foreign aid, insofar as it is successful (which is not self-evident; Easterly 2006), is best seen as a serious contribution to a friendlier international system.

Yet while the aid regime as an international practice rooted in moral factors does not imply the abandonment of neorealism, it does suggest that neorealism be refined. The aid regime suggests a neorealist theory that is not just not extreme in explaining all state behavior directly on the basis of security-related factors, but is also closer to neoidealism than most neorealist theories based on the four core propositions employed above presumably will be. After all, second image cosmopolitanism does seep through state boundaries into the international system. The result would be a 'mixed neorealist' theory that assigns clear priority to national security because of non-transformed system constraints yet also *expects* states, if once secure, to show altruistic instead of further egoistic behavior, depending on the nature and development of their domestic moral-political systems. Such a theory, I would provisionally contend at the

end of this article, may well have more explanatory power than Alexander Wendt's (1999) 'constructivist neorealism', which utopianistically assumes states under anarchy and its systemic pressures to be capable of transcending primary egoism in favor of a deep altruism including collective identity and to move up to a 'Kantian culture' of 'friendship' world-wide rather than merely Europe-wide.

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## Notes

[1] It should be emphasized that I offer no direct (empirical) defense of neorealism's core propositions here. Rather, my defense is indirect: for all the immediate moral impulses behind it, the foreign aid regime does not refute neorealism as neoidealists believe, but supports its dominant international-theoretical status.

[2] Methodologically, Lumsdaine (1993: 60-62, 270) rightly suggests the analytic unhelpfulness of understanding recipient-oriented aid behavior in terms of national (self)interest. If national (self)interest included both actions directed at tangible (military and economic) benefits for the state itself and actions primarily directed at the benefit of others or pursued from a sense of duty, it would seem tautological. Also, to conclude that a state shows self-interested behavior when it seeks international influence or prestige by pursuing a generous aid policy is too quick: if this state wants recognition by promoting economic development abroad as an end in itself, its behavior of giving money away is not meaningfully



conceived as self-interested.

[3] By 2000 about 90 percent of all bilateral aid from the 22 member states of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was in grants; 10 members gave their aid entirely in grants (Hattori 2003: 243).

[4] French aid has traditionally promoted the donor's cultural and economic interests through the maintenance of a regional sphere of influence, attempting to reassert France's historical position as a global power. Hence it has been concentrated on former colonies (cf. also Noël and Thérien 2002: 648). Yet, while acknowledging this, Lumsdaine (1993: 85-86, 126, 164-165) also shows that Mitterand's socialist government turned around a long-term decline of aid to a substantially higher level with a much greater poverty focus.

[5] The authors borrow a typology of 'socialist', 'liberal' and 'conservative' welfare state attributes from Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) path-breaking work. They assume that the country scores for socialist attributes stayed the same in 1991 (their second mark year) as these were in 1980, the year for which Esping-Andersen had compiled his scores, insisting that potential changes must not be overestimated: as institutions change slowly at most, Esping-Andersen's original scores seem fairly constant indicators of welfare state institutions over time (Thérien and Noël 2000: 154-155; Noël and Thérien 2002: 640). Indeed, as welfare states have proved to be very resilient in the light of economic globalization and European integration, one may speak of a "'frozen" welfare state landscape' (Esping-Andersen 1996: quotation 24).

[6] One might object that by providing much aid to poor countries small states may try to gain international status and support in international organizations, so that a directly neorealist perspective on small states could also explain it. However, first, it is doubtful whether giving money away to poor countries would really lead to a significant increase of small states' power or influence in a security-related sense, and more so than spending this money for developing high tech industry, a stronger army, a shipping industry, or scientific or cultural distinction (cf. Lumsdaine 1993: 60). Indeed, insofar as these international organizations have it, the power, or 'authority', of the World Bank and the United Nations seems better understood in normative, even moral, terms than in material ones (cf. Finnemore 1996: 89-127; Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Second, such a directly neorealist explanation would, implausibly, either have to deal with the (clearly established) socialism-foreign aid correlation as an unimportant coincidence, or have to explain this correlation on the basis that small states, and only such states, tend to be social democratic because of international system pressures. In short, it seems more plausible to hold that by generous aid provision these small countries seek an international voice mainly because of moral reasons.

[7] Norway (which has an almost pure 'socialist' welfare state), Sweden (which indeed has a purely 'socialist' welfare state), and Denmark have strong Left traditions and firmly established socialist welfare attributes. Dutch governance has mostly been dominated by centrist Christian democracy, but that has remarkably pursued a generous social democratic politics and thus created strong socialist welfare institutions in an attempt to stay in power against the Left (which further expanded the welfare state when it came to power in the 1970s) (Thérien and Noël 2000: 157, 159-160; Cox 1993: 168-169, 218-219). In the United Kingdom, the Left has been able to exercise much cumulative power through diverse Labor governments, but the welfare state still has more liberal than socialist attributes because of British traditional individualism (cf. Breuning 1995). The French welfare state scores 'low-socialist', but French politics has given a prominent place to the republican notion of social solidarity, with consequent reforms along social democratic lines, so that eventually the French welfare state is familiar to 'mid-socialist' ones. In Germany, Christian democracy is even more strongly present than the Left, but, unlike in the Netherlands, here no situation exists of a center party pursuing social reforms under pressure from the Left. In Japan and the United States, the Left and socialist attributes have had very little chance to develop.

[8] It remains to be seen, however, whether foreign aid really is a type of redistribution. See the next section.

[9] The EU's prolonged agricultural support comes to mind. Of total EU expenditure, about 50 percent is allocated to the common agricultural policy. Arguably, both the EU and the United States contribute to pauperization of farmers globally, but the former causes the greatest damage (Radelet 2003: 116). Note also the wide gap between the EU's rhetorical commitment to international climate policy and its actual behavior of increasing carbon dioxide emission - indeed, a gap wider than that in case of the United States.

[10] One might think this conclusion is too quick. Perhaps neoidealists may shift to a communitarian rather

than cosmopolitan second image explanation of aid. Thus, they might explain aid by pointing out that people within Western countries apparently endorse a principle of priority for compatriots in the distribution of material goods, and believe their obligations to foreigners to be significant yet more limited (cf. Walzer 1983; Miller 1995). In this way, neoidealism might uphold the overall explanatory role of moral factors in aid, explaining the progressive/conservative discontinuity itself. However, this escape strategy from neoidealism's original, more cosmopolitan assumptions and their drawbacks may not work. First, it contradicts the non-nationalist evidence neoidealists themselves offer. Second, European public culture being cosmopolitan rather than nationalist seems not that surprising, as for a socialist facing an asymmetrical capitalist world economy of ever increasing inequalities the concern for global fairness should overrule the potentially deep significance of the national community. Third, if neoidealism now could prove European aid to result from societies upholding a nationalist, 'two-level' version of socialism actually inconsistent with the original doctrine (like our neoidealists I shall not assume this to be the case, yet I consider it here for the sake of argument), its explanatory success would have a high price: the loss of its morally transformative appeal. Indeed, a communitarian aid explanation would fit well within a neorealist worldview: nations need state power if they wish to give firmness and consistency to their members' interests and obligations, and this entails the existence of a third image environment that may have causal significance for state behavior (Waltz 1959: 184). Neorealism might not help to explain aid under this hypothetical circumstance, but my thesis that the aid regime is strongly consistent with neorealism would then still hold.

[11] It is thus also wrong to assume that neorealism must predict aid to decline with the end of the Cold War (contra Hattori 2001: 649) or to be continuously tied as a vehicle to influence recipient countries.

[12] From a neorealist perspective, it is no surprise that Lumsdaine can find 'an inverse relation between support for aid and concern about strengthening military defense' for 'all Europe' (Lumsdaine 1993: 143, based on the 1983 Euro-Barometer study). Indeed, no-longer truly great powers such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, and also the Netherlands, spend relatively little for defense, having little incentive to spend more.

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